

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 02501 111526Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /011 W
-----111619Z 009048 /46 R
R 101427Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1597

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 2501

STADIS//////////

FOR NEA/EGY FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP, EG
SUBJ: 1977 VISIT OF COPTIC POPE SHENOUDA TO US

REF STATE 28502,

1. AMB HAS HAD NO RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH FAHMY ON COPTIC POPE SHENOUDA'S PROPOSED APRIL VISIT TO US. WE ARE UNABLE TO CONFIRM, THEREFORE, WHETHER GHORBAL'S INGENIOUS SCENARIO HAS IN FACT RECEIVED FAHMY'S APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE. IF A MEETING AT THE BAPTIST CHURCH AFTER THE SERVICE CAN BE WORKED OUT AS GHORBAL SUGGESTS, THIS WOULD CREATE NO IRRITATION HERE.

2. MORE BASIC QUESTION WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE ANSWERED IS WHETHER PRECEDENT EXISTS FOR PRESIDENT FORMALLY INVITING A SENIOR FOREIGN CHURCH LEADER TO VISIT US. WE ARE UNABLE RESEARCH SUBJECT HERE, BUT IT HAS BEEN OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS IS NOT CUSTOMARILY DONE IN VIEW OUR CONSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE. IF THIS IMPRESSION IS CORRECT, PRESUMABLY NO FORMAL INVITATION FOR POPE SHENOUDA WOULD IN ANY CASE BE POSSIBLE. THERE WOULD STILL BE THE POSSIBILITY OF A CALL ON THE PRESIDENT, WHICH FAHMY WOULD OBVIOUSLY LIKE TO AVOID. AMB WILL MAKE SOME FURTHER DISCREET
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INQUIRIES TO ASCERTAIN FAHMY'S CURRENT THINKING.

3. ON A RELATED MATTER, YOU SHOULD KNOW OF SEVERAL RECENT INDICATIONS THAT THE GRAND SHEIKH OF AL AZHAR, DR ABDEL HALIM MAHMOUD, IS INTERESTED IN VISITING THE US AND WOULD WELCOME AN OFFICIAL INVITATION. A VISIT BY THE GRAND SHEIKH OF AL AZHAR COULD HAVE CONSIDERABLE IMPACT HERE, BUT IF OUR

ASSUMPTION (ABOVE) IS CORRECT, THERE WOULD SEEM TO BE NO WAY OF EXTENDING HIM AN OFFICIAL INVITATION. WE ARE LOOKING INTO WHETHER WE MIGHT ARRANGE TO SEND HIM ON SOME SORT OF A LEADER GRANT, HOPEFULLY FUZZING THE ISSUE OF A FORMAL USG INVITATION IF DEPT HAS ANY THOUGHTS ON THIS, PLEASE LET US KNOW.
EILTS

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Reason:
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